



Comox Valley Hospice Society

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021



Contents

- 3 Message From The President
- 4 Our Purpose
- 5 Monthly Highlights From Our COVID Year
- 6 Clients Served
- 7 Program Updates
- 9 Our Volunteers
- 10 Caroline's Story
- 11 Financial Highlights
- 12 The Faces Behind Our Services
- 13 What's Ahead
- 15 Thank You

Message From The President

As we ended fiscal 2020, the global pandemic of COVID-19 had just begun. The only certainty was that unforeseeable challenges were bound to come. The world at times seemed to pause, but CVHS forged ahead; pivoting, adapting and performing on the highest level, while serving over 750 clients.

We were also met with the tragic death of our biggest champion and previous ED, Terri Odeneal. As many at CVHS struggled with our own grief, it reinforced the importance of why the Society exists, and how we deliver our services. In ways, Terri's passing invigorated the group to perform our best under uncertain conditions.

As unprecedented as the challenge, were our accomplishments. As you will see through the following report this year has been incredibly busy as we set the stage for the years ahead in our new home at Ocean Front Village.

I would like to thank our amazing team of staff led by Executive Director Jane Sterk, along with our Board of Directors, volunteers and our community donors who provide 70% of our operational funding. One thing is certain -- not even a global pandemic will stop you!



CHRIS SWIFT
President, CVHS Board of Directors



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Our Purpose is . . .

Easing the journey of dying
and grieving



Monthly Highlights From Our COVID Year

April 2020

Staff begin working from home; all services become virtual; Ultimate 50-50 Cancelled

June 2020

New ED arrives; 1 mo. overlap with Terri; 1st On-line Art of Grief Group; Terri retires

Aug 2020

Weekly Virtual Meditation & Healing Circle begins; Fall Volunteer Training cancelled

Oct 2020

Grief & Beyond Hybrid group; Small cluster walking groups; Volunteer Coordinator training for Camilla

Dec 2020

Virtual Blue Christmas; Phantom raises \$61,000; Ruth retires; Virtual Caregiver Group

Feb 2021

Bereavement Counsellor hired; 100+ Women support COLT; Volunteers back at H@TV & CVH case by case

CVHS qualifies for CEWS Wage Subsidy; Decided July COLT Ride will be virtual

May 2020

COVID Safety Plan in place; Re-imagine Palliative & Grief Services

July 2020

Private staff gathering to remember Terri; Limited in person in office counselling resumes

Sept 2020

Phantom fundraiser gets \$25,000 matching gift; Brief short-lived reopening of Cancer Care Clinic

Nov 2020

Nature Walks tested; Fundraising Ambassadors created

Jan 2021

Nature Walks finalized; Monthly volunteer education workshops offered; Yoga for the Grieving Heart Group

March 2021

2020-21 Clients Served



244

Palliative Clients

Individuals who are at the end stage of life and/or end stage of a life-limiting, ultimately life-ending chronic illness.

121

Anticipatory Grief Clients

Family members or loved ones of a palliative individual. CVHS support can include respite, anticipatory grief counselling, volunteer companionship, Supportive Family Circle Group, Self Care Clinic, Healing Meditation, etc.

389

Bereavement Clients

Individuals who have suffered a recent loss to death. CVHS is unable to support chronic bereavement – deaths that occurred several years or even decades ago. Nor do we have the capacity to support complex mental health or addiction issues where bereavement is an aspect.

Bereavement Program Update

Beginning in July 2020, the clinical team started a process of re-imagining bereavement services under pandemic restrictions. Working groups were established to develop proposals for grief groups that would support both clients and provide new opportunities for volunteers to co-facilitate groups with counsellors. The Healing Art of Grief group was the first to be adapted to an on-line Zoom format and proved very successful.

Over the course of the year the following were offered: Gentle Walks for Grieving Hearts small cluster groups (mid-August to mid-October); two additional 6-week on-line Healing Art of Grief (fall 2020 & winter 2021); an 8-week Grief and Beyond hybrid group (fall 2020); an 8-week on-line Yoga for the Grieving Heart group (winter/spring 2021). In addition, a 4-week pilot Nature Walks Support Group tested self-led walks (January 2021 – ongoing).



GRIEF GROUPS – PROVE A LIFELINE TO HEALING

“The art projects helped to reveal what was impeding my healing journey... gave me insight into what was going on within me. As I make progress, my mind is becoming less scattered and more clear.” (Healing Art of Grief Participant)

“Even if only for a little while, I felt I could be honest about my feelings instead of hiding them for others.” (Grief & Beyond Participant)

BEREAVEMENT/COMPLICATED GRIEF COUNSELLING

We noticed an increase in complicated and overwhelming grief amongst our bereavement counselling clients. COVID presented new and traumatic challenges.

“COVID affected us all before, during and after our loss... with widespread and deeply felt effects. Post Traumatic COVID Syndrome is ongoing. The rules and information keep changing. It’s like shadow boxing in the dark and being on a roller coaster ride on steroids.” (Client feedback)

Palliative Program Update

The pandemic highlighted the importance of the Comox Valley Hospice Society's Palliative Program. Early in the pandemic, CVHS participated virtually as part of the interdisciplinary teams at Comox Valley Hospital (CVH) and Hospice at the Views (H@TV) as they made care plans for palliative patients. From June 2020 on, meetings returned to in person. CVHS advocacy proved essential in ensuring care decisions addressed not only the patient's psycho-social needs but their caregivers' capacities and resources as well.

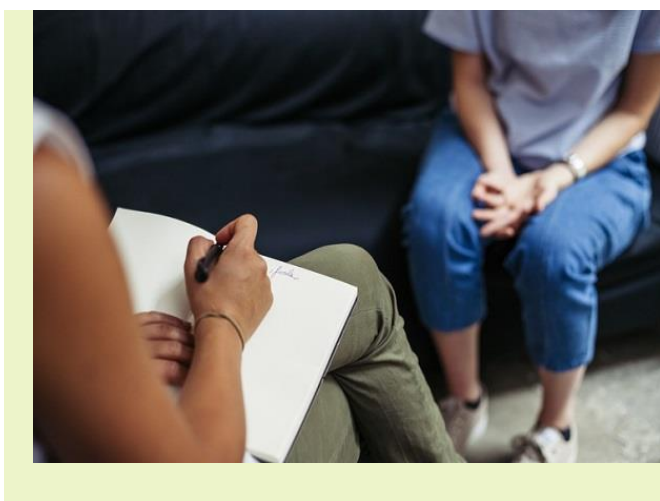
Two CVHS counsellors work on site at CVH and H@TV four days a week supporting Palliative clients and their caregivers. They also provide critical debriefing for hospital and hospice facility staff when there are particularly challenging situations or when they need support due to the accumulative grief from so much death.



SUPPORTIVE CIRCLE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

This new on-line group ran Wednesday mornings from Oct 14 – Dec 6, 2020 and has been offered weekly on Wednesday afternoons since Jan 27, 2021.

Getting instant feedback and being able to talk with people in similar situations proved most helpful for participants.



ANTICIPATORY GRIEF COUNSELLING

Throughout the pandemic, counselling sessions were offered by phone and over Zoom and starting in September 2020, in-person fully masked and socially distanced at the CVHS community offices. Some counselling sessions took place outside at people's homes and at H@TVs and at CVH.

Our Volunteers

This past year inspired significant growth and change for our organization. In addition to rethinking the programs and services we offer our clients, we also had to rethink how to keep our volunteers engaged during a pandemic when some programs were suspended indefinitely and others had to transition online.

Not able to hold new volunteer training, we focussed our attention on our existing volunteers and conducted a volunteer survey in summer 2020. We had a great completion rate with results showing a desire for greater ongoing support, more inclusion and an interest in continuing education opportunities.

In response to the survey we launched a new continuing education series featuring Alan Wolfelt's Eleven Tenets of Companioning the Bereaved, we began hosting virtual get-togethers for volunteers every month and we created peer leader roles to help maintain connections. We enlisted volunteers to assist in developing new programs such as Grief Yoga and our Nature Walk series and to work with our counsellors to help facilitate various grief support groups.

Our self-care clinic also transitioned from in-person delivery and 15 volunteers have been providing distance energy healing to an average of 30-40 clients every week as part of our Meditation Healing Circle. Most recently CVHS participated in a focus group along with several other hospice organizations in B.C. to help identify and describe what the core provincial hospice palliative care volunteer competencies should be; 6 volunteers joined our sub focus group to share their thoughts and opinions.

"Why do I do this? To be of service and to give as my family members and I received. But what I didn't know when I set out on this path was how deeply moved I would be by the privilege of being present with those who are approaching death and those who care for them during that time. I often hear hospice volunteers speak of this time as being "sacred". I share that thought ... and I am so grateful to be in the company of such kind, caring individuals." Joan C

"During my time with CVHS I have had the honor of volunteering across multiple capacities within the organization; vigils, 1:1, facilitating bereavement groups, volunteer support, office support, fundraising, and leading the creation team for the Self Care Clinic." Rhianna W

"I think that is the main satisfaction I get from my Hospice Bereavement work, walking alongside people for a while on their journey, and witnessing those little "Ah-has", when they realize that deep grief doesn't last forever." Robert M.

"At Hospice one can volunteer in numerous ways to accommodate the needs of the community. It is a private endeavour when with patients, as we honour their privacy. The returns of knowing you have given comfort, changed someone's day, respected their individuality, and shared time with them to show your caring...the rewards and returns to us are profound. They are private too but how they can nourish the soul!" Anna Belle E.

Caroline's Story

My connection with Comox Valley Hospice Society came about very unexpectedly. My husband Ole and I had been together for a little over 50 years. Raising children, running a business, volunteering, building homes.

Challenges and triumphs, successes and failures, events both happy and sad – and now here was our time. With children and grandchildren secure in their lives, we made the most of every day. Gardening, cycling, hiking, woodworking, music and cooking, simple little getaways, offering ourselves to the community – and relishing in each other's company. In our mid-70's, this was just about as close to perfect as could be imagined.

Then out of the blue a crisis, an ambulance, a few weeks of recovery, rehabilitation, hope and optimism only to be shattered by a sudden death. All our expectations gone and the ghastly realisation that Ole had gone – for ever.

It was approximately 2 ½ months after Ole's death that I first made contact with CVHS. An appointment was set up with Brenda which has led to a warm, kind and helpful partnership. I remember the first insight that struck me was how Brenda put the timeline into perspective. It had been only 2 ½ months since Ole's death following a 50-year bond – so it was hardly surprisingly that this loss was so profound and the grief so raw.

In addition to spending time with Brenda, I attended a weekly discussion and support group. It was a very useful sharing opportunity. I also took advantage of the self care clinics and a walking group. I borrowed books and CD's from the extensive library.

Brenda and I met every couple of weeks and then less frequently for at least a year, with the occasional contact since then. Through her I gained a greater understanding about my new role in the family. I have come to realise how much my grandchildren need me in their lives and what an important place their grandfather held.

Compassion, support, kindness, understanding, empathy, education – these are all words that easily come to mind when thinking of CVHS. I am definitely a different person from who I was before this bereavement. I know that the loss I feel physically, emotionally and spiritually will linger although as I carve out my new life, I hope that these feelings will just be part of who I am but will not define me.



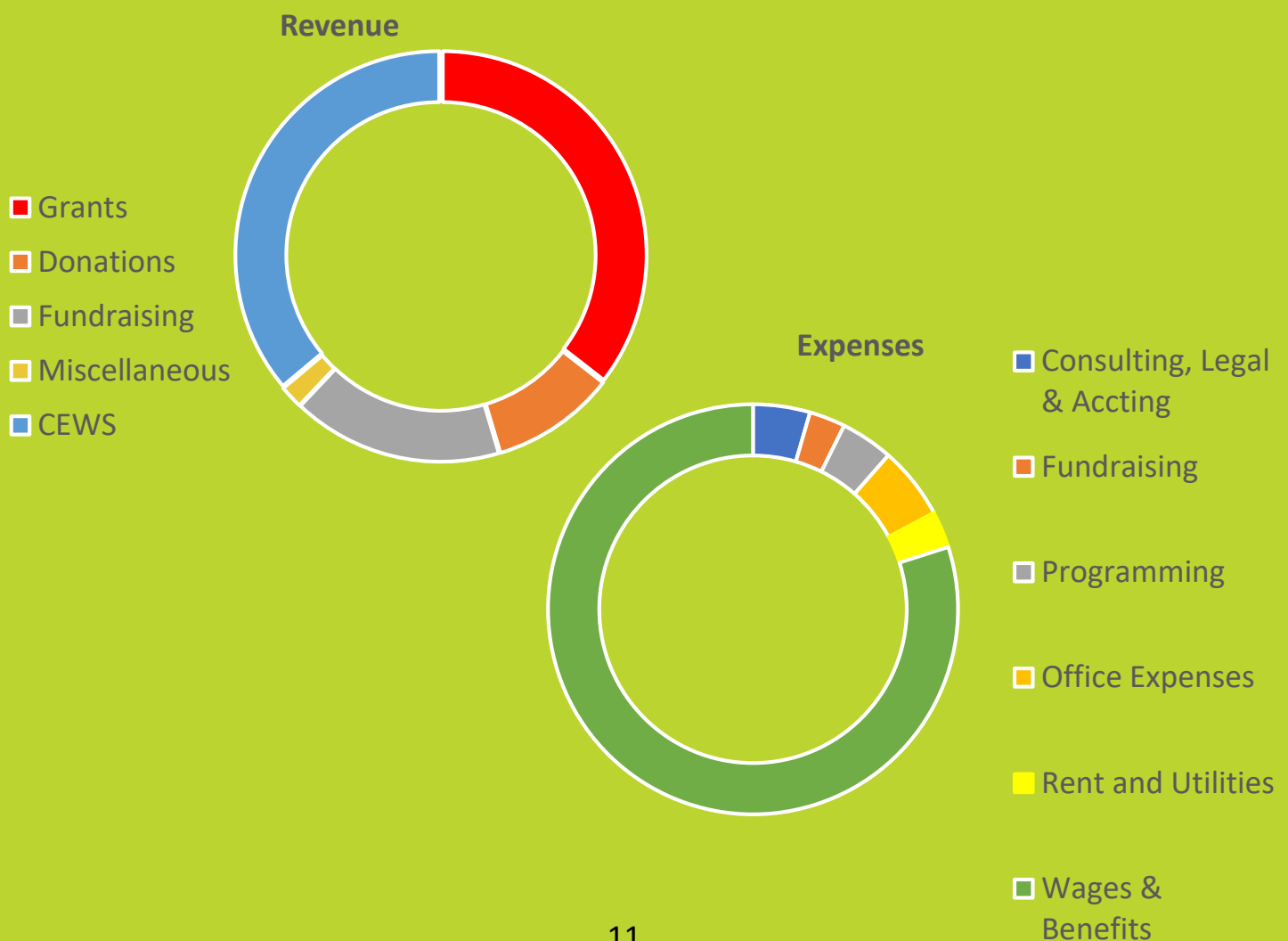
Our Financial Highlights

Throughout this challenging year, we discovered that pandemics impact not only programs, staff, clients and volunteers but finances too. Fortunately, we ended the year with a small surplus. Overall, revenue exceeded budget but this was due to the significant level of Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) funding received. The budgeted revenues from general donations and fundraising was \$214,500 whereas actual revenue was only 56% of budget (\$119,292). It is expected that some items may fluctuate until the pandemic is over.

To meet the requirements of our Community Gaming Grant, more information about our revenue sources is provided in the notes to the financial statements than in previous financial statements.

This year, the board created a Finance Committee that meets quarterly to review the financial position against the budget. The budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year reflects cautious optimism related to expected easing of pandemic restrictions..

Our staff did not qualify for the 16-week front-line worker pandemic pay provided by the province. In the spring of 2021, the Board approved equivalent bonuses to recognize the extraordinary work done by our staff under unprecedented circumstances.



The Faces Behind Our Services

Comox Valley Hospice Society has a remarkably skilled and dedicated counselling and support team. Everyone put their heart and energy into supporting clients under extremely challenging and constantly changing pandemic rules and expectations without any break or reduction in service. And, despite having to shift counselling sessions and many programs on-line, the number of clients served was almost the same as 2019. We innovated, learned lots and some of our “re-imagined” programming will continue beyond COVID.

“

I'm proud to be part of a passionate team creating lasting change for people in the Comox Valley who are navigating the journey of dying and grieving.”

Christy Linder, Program Coordinator



What's Ahead



In February, the Board hired Colin Sauer of the Governance Group to facilitate the development of a new Strategic Plan, a process that took place in March and April. The new Strategic Plan is presented

below. Over the course of the next few months, staff will be operationalizing the plan and implementing it and over time, evaluating how well we achieve our goals.

In May of 2022, CVHS will move to our new offices adjacent to the new 6-bed Aitken Community Hospice which is being built by Golden Life Management at the Ocean Front Village opposite the Driftwood Mall. All the hospice rooms back onto the Airpark walkway and have beautiful views of the estuary. This new location opens up tremendous new opportunities for hospice palliative care in the Comox Valley, including new roles for volunteers.

We believe in.....

- Compassionate person-centered care and support
- Respect for personal autonomy and choice
- Teamwork and community collaboration
- The value of our volunteers
- Relationships grounded in honesty, integrity and trust
- Thoughtful stewardship of all financial resources

We are a.....

A community supported, self-sustaining organization that models excellence

Strategic Plan

Financial

Ensure our financial planning builds clarity, confidence and long-term sustainability

Programs

Ensure our programs are comprehensive, inclusive, relevant and equitable

Process

Create a multi year, “fit for purpose” marketing and donor engagement strategy

People

- 1) Develop succession planning for all critical positions
- 2) Ensure high quality employee and volunteer recruitment, training, and support programs



Thank you!



To our 2020-21 Grant & Government Funders!



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**Special Thanks to our
matching donor
Garry Fizzell**





Thank You!

Thanks to the Comox Valley Service Clubs – Legion, Lions and Rotary – that continue to support our work.

Thanks to those who have recognized CVHS through bequests, in their wills and in memory of a loved one.

Thanks to our donors and our event sponsors and prize contributors.

Thanks to our clients, volunteers and supporters.

We couldn't have done it without your help.

Thank you for being part of the Comox Valley hospice palliative care community.

Thank you for believing in our mission.

We are forever grateful.

The CVHS Team

Make a difference!

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LEGACY GIFT

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